

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF WEST VIRGINIA**

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

v.

Criminal Action No. 2:13-cr-32-1

**ELIZABETH ALLISON SWEATT,
Defendant.**

ORDER/OPINION REGARDING PLEA OF GUILTY

This matter has been referred to the undersigned Magistrate Judge by the District Court for purposes of conducting proceedings pursuant to Federal Rule of Criminal Procedure 11. Defendant, Elizabeth Allison Sweatt, in person and by counsel, James Bustamante and Dorwin Wolfe, appeared before me on , 2014. The Government appeared by Shawn Morgan, its Assistant United States Attorney. The Court determined that Defendant was prepared to enter a plea of “Guilty” to Count Two of the Indictment.

The Court proceeded with the Rule 11 hearing by first placing Defendant under oath.

The Court determined that Defendant’s plea was pursuant to a written plea agreement, and asked the Government to tender the original to the Court. The Court asked counsel for the Government if the agreement was the sole agreement offered to Defendant. The Government responded that it was and counsel for Defendant confirmed the same. The Court asked counsel for the Government to summarize the written Plea Agreement. Defendant stated that the agreement as summarized by counsel for the Government was correct and complied with her understanding of the agreement. The Court **ORDERED** the written Plea Agreement filed.

The Court inquired of Defendant concerning her understanding of her right to have an Article III Judge hear the entry of her guilty plea and her understanding of the difference between an Article III Judge and a Magistrate Judge. Defendant stated in open court that she voluntarily waived her

right to have an Article III Judge hear and accept her plea and voluntarily consented to the undersigned Magistrate Judge hearing and accepting her plea, and tendered to the Court a written Waiver of Article III Judge and Consent To Enter Guilty Plea Before Magistrate Judge, which waiver and consent was signed by Defendant and countersigned by Defendant's counsel and was concurred in by the signature of the Assistant United States Attorney appearing.

Upon consideration of the sworn testimony of Defendant, as well as the representations of her counsel and the representations of the Government, the Court finds that the oral and written waiver of Article III Judge and consent to enter guilty plea before a Magistrate Judge was freely and voluntarily given and the written waiver and consent was freely and voluntarily executed by Defendant, Elizabeth Allison Sweatt, only after having had her rights fully explained to her and having a full understanding of those rights through consultation with her counsel, as well as through questioning by the Court. The Court **ORDERED** the written Waiver and Consent to Enter Guilty Plea before a Magistrate Judge filed and made part of the record.

The Court then inquired of Defendant whether she was a citizen of the United States. Defendant responded that she is a citizen. The undersigned asked Defendant whether she understood that if she were not a citizen of the United States, by pleading guilty to a felony charge she would be subject to deportation at the conclusion of any sentence; that she would be denied future entry into the United States; and that she would be denied citizenship if she ever applied for it. Defendant stated that she understood.

The undersigned then reviewed with Defendant Count Two of the Indictment and the elements the government would have to prove, charging her with aiding and abetting the possession of marijuana with intent to distribute, in violation of 21 U.S.C. §§ 841(a)(1) & 841(b)(1)(D), and 18

U.S.C. § 2. The undersigned then reviewed with Defendant the statutory penalties applicable to an individual adjudicated guilty of the felony charges contained in Count Two of the Indictment, the impact of the sentencing guidelines on sentencing in general, and inquired of Defendant as to her competency to proceed with the plea hearing. From said review the undersigned Magistrate Judge determined Defendant understood the nature of the charge pending against her and understood the possible statutory maximum sentence which could be imposed upon her conviction or adjudication of guilty on that charge was imprisonment for a term of not more than five (5) years; understood that a fine of not more than \$250,000.00 could be imposed; understood that both fine and imprisonment could be imposed; understood she would be subject to a period of two (2) years supervised release; and understood the Court would impose a special mandatory assessment of \$100.00 for the felony conviction payable on or before the date of sentencing. She also understood that her sentence could be increased if she had a prior firearm offense, violent felony conviction, or prior drug conviction. She also understood she might be required by the Court to pay the costs of her incarceration and supervised release.

The undersigned also reviewed with Defendant her waiver of appellate rights as follows:

Ct. Did you and your lawyers discuss and did you understand from that discussion that under 18 U.S.C. § 3742, you have a right to appeal your conviction and your sentence to the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals?

Def. Yes, Your Honor.

Ct. Did you and your lawyers discuss and did you understand from that discussion that under 28 U.S.C. § 2255, you may collaterally attack or challenge the sentence and how it's being carried out by filing what is commonly called a habeas corpus motion?

Def. Yes, Your Honor.

Ct. Did you understand that under paragraph 14 of your written plea agreement, if the United States District Judges, 6 or 8 weeks from now at sentencing, imposes an actual sentence which is consistent an advisory Guideline total offense level of 12 or lower, then you give up your right to appeal that actual sentence to the Fourth Circuit and you give up your right to collaterally attack or challenge that actual sentence by filing a writ of habeas corpus motion?

Def. Yes, Your Honor.

Ct. Did you intend to give up these direct appeal rights and collateral attack rights under the conditions set forth in paragraph 14 of your written plea agreement?

Def. Yes, Your Honor.

Ct. And that was your own free, knowing, voluntary, and intelligent decision?

Def. Yes, Your Honor.

Ct. And you fully discussed that with your lawyers before you signed the agreement?

Def. Yes, Your Honor.

Ct. And nothing about your understanding of that provision in the agreement has changed since you signed it on April the 14th and today, approximately a month later?

Def. No, Your Honor.

From the foregoing colloquy the undersigned determined that Defendant understood her appellate rights and knowingly gave up those rights pursuant to the condition contained in the written plea agreement.

The undersigned Magistrate Judge further examined Defendant relative to her knowledgeable and voluntary execution of the written plea bargain agreement, and determined the entry into said written plea bargain agreement was both knowledgeable and voluntary on the part of Defendant. The undersigned then inquired of Defendant regarding her understanding of the written plea agreement. Defendant stated she understood the terms of the written plea agreement and also stated that it contained the whole of her agreement with the Government and no promises or representations were made to her by the Government or other persons, including her own attorney, other than those terms contained in the written plea agreement.

The undersigned Magistrate Judge further inquired of Defendant, her counsel, and the Government as to the non-binding recommendations and stipulation contained in the written plea bargain agreement and determined that Defendant understood, with respect to the plea bargain agreement and to Defendant's entry of a plea of guilty to the felony charge contained in Count Two of the Indictment, the undersigned Magistrate Judge would write the subject Order and would further order a pre-sentence investigation report be prepared by the probation officer attending the District Court. The undersigned advised the Defendant that the District Judge would adjudicate the Defendant guilty of the felony charged under Count Two of the Indictment. Only after the District Court had an opportunity to review the pre-sentence investigation report, would the District Court make a determination as to whether to accept or reject any recommendation or stipulation contained within the plea agreement or pre-sentence report. The undersigned reiterated to the Defendant that the District Judge may not agree with the recommendations or stipulation contained in the written agreement. The undersigned Magistrate Judge further advised Defendant, in accord with Federal Rule of Criminal Procedure 11, that in the event the District Court Judge refused to follow the non-

binding recommendations or stipulation contained in the written plea agreement and/or sentenced her to a sentence which was different from that which she expected, she would not be permitted to withdraw her guilty plea. Defendant acknowledged her understanding and Defendant maintained her desire to have her plea of guilty accepted.

Defendant also understood that her actual sentence could not be calculated until after a pre-sentence report was prepared and a sentencing hearing conducted. The undersigned also advised, and Defendant stated that she understood, that the Sentencing Guidelines are no longer mandatory, and that, even if the District Judge did not follow the Sentencing Guidelines or sentenced her to a higher sentence than she expected, she would not have a right to withdraw her guilty plea. Defendant further stated her attorney showed her how the advisory guideline chart worked but did not promise her any specific sentence at the time of sentencing. Defendant stated that she understood her attorney could not predict or promise her what actual sentence she would receive from the sentencing judge at the sentencing hearing. Defendant further understood there was no parole in the federal system, although she may be able to earn institutional good time, and that good time was not controlled by the Court, but by the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

Defendant, Elizabeth Allison Sweatt, with the consent of her counsel, Dorwin Wolfe, proceeded to enter a verbal plea of **GUILTY** to the felony charge in Count Two of the Indictment.

The Court would generally hear the testimony of a Government witness at this point in the hearing to support an independent basis in fact for the guilty plea. In this case, the parties agreed that the Government would provide a proffer to provide that independent basis in fact. The Government represented that the following proffer, provided by Defendant, satisfied the factual basis for Count Two of the Indictment:

I, Elizabeth Sweatt, from January of 2013 and through July 2013, sent marijuana through the U.S. mail to Veronica Dougherty in Elkins, West Virginia. The total amount of marijuana delivered was between 11.5 pounds equal to five kilos.

The Government further proffered that the particular package forming the basis for Count Two was one mailed to co-defendant Veronica Dougherty within the Northern District of West Virginia. The Government further stated that the total relevant conduct stipulation in Defendant's proffer comprises the total relevant conduct stipulation contained in the written plea agreement. Counsel for the Government further proffered that during the time period covered by the proffer, Defendant was located in California and Dougherty was located in Elkins, West Virginia, within the Northern District of West Virginia. The controlled substances mailed did include marijuana, and Dougherty has already pled guilty to the same offense.

Defendant stated she heard, understood, and did not disagree with the proffer provided by the Government. The undersigned United States Magistrate Judge concludes the offense charged in Count Two of the Indictment is supported by an independent basis in fact concerning each of the essential elements of such offense. That independent basis is provided by the proffer.

Upon consideration of all of the above, the undersigned Magistrate Judge finds that Defendant is fully competent and capable of entering an informed plea; Defendant is aware of and understood her right to have an Article III Judge hear and accept her plea and elected to voluntarily consent to the undersigned United States Magistrate Judge hearing and accepting her plea; Defendant understood the charges against her, not only as to the Indictment as a whole, but in particular as to Count Two of the Indictment; Defendant understood the consequences of her plea of guilty, in particular the maximum statutory penalty to which her would be exposed; Defendant made a knowing and voluntary plea of guilty to Count Two of the Indictment; and Defendant's plea is

independently supported by the proffer, which provides, beyond a reasonable doubt, proof of each of the essential elements of the charge to which Defendant has pled guilty.

The undersigned Magistrate Judge therefore **ACCEPTS** Defendant's plea of guilty to Count Two of the Indictment and finds her guilty on said charge as contained in Count Two of the Indictment.

The undersigned further directs that a pre-sentence investigation report be prepared by the adult probation officer assigned to this case.

Defendant is continued on release pursuant to the Order Setting Conditions of Release previously entered in this matter.

It is so **ORDERED**.

The Clerk of the Court is directed to send a copy of this Order to counsel of record.

DATED: May 14, 2014

s/ John S. Kaull
JOHN S. KAULL
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE